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ABSTRACT

A program for improving student social skills was implemented in three classrooms of lower-class kindergarten and second grade students at two schools in order to reduce the number of behavior problems. Student behavior is a nationwide educational concern, and the problem of inappropriate behavior at the schools was documented by teacher observation (using a behavior checklist), discipline related contacts with parents, and the number of discipline referrals. The literature suggests causes for the behavior problems include students' lack of social skills, lack of positive role models, lack of self-esteem, and lack of positive parental involvement; media violence; and childhood abuse. An action plan for intervention was implemented to increase social skill development through direct instruction, conflict resolution, role playing, modeling, and cooperative learning opportunities. Post-program data (utilizing teacher observation, parent contacts, and discipline referrals) indicated an increase in appropriate behavior and in interpersonal skills. (Twelve appendices include checklists, forms, charts, book lists, suggested books and cassettes, cooperative learning lessons, and a description of learning centers. Contains 40 references.) (TM)

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IMPROVING STUDENT BEHAVIOR THROUGH SOCIAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Master's Program

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Abstract

Authors: Staci Cook
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Date: December, 1995

Title: Improving Student Behavior Through Social Skills Instruction

This report describes a program for improving student social skills in order to reduce the number of behavior problems. The targeted population consisted of kindergarten and second grade students in a growing lower class community located in a Northern Illinois city. The problem of inappropriate behavior has been documented through teacher observation, the number of parent contacts related to behavior and the number of discipline referrals.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students lacked social skills, positive role models, self-esteem and positive parental involvement. The literature suggested that poverty and low socioeconomic status can lead to dysfunctional families which may result in students' basic needs not being met.

A review of solution strategies resulted in the decision to increase social skill development through direct instruction, role playing, modeling and cooperative learning opportunities.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in appropriate behavior and interpersonal skills.

Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

The students of the targeted second grade and kindergarten classes exhibit inappropriate behavior. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher observations, the number of parent contacts relative to student behavior, and discipline referrals.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted classes are in two elementary schools, School A and School B, in Rockford, Illinois. School A is a Community Academy School (C-8) as designated by the Federal Courts. It is a kindergarten through sixth grade school located in the southwest quadrant of Rockford. The school was built in 1902, with an addition built in 1969. The addition includes a learning center, with six open classrooms, which now have walls.

School A has an enrollment of 282 students consisting of 18 percent Caucasian, 80 percent African American and two percent Hispanic. Ninety-two percent of the school's population qualifies as low income. These students come from homes that receive public funds or are eligible for free or reduced price lunches. The student mobility rate for School A is 60.1 percent, whereas the average in District 205 is 22.4 percent. School A has an attendance rate of 94 percent, compared to 92 percent for all schools in District 205. The average class size for School A is 18 children.

The certified staff at School A consists of a management team (principal, student support specialist, curriculum implementor, Success for All reading implementor), a special education resource teacher, 2 Chapter 1 teachers, a reading recovery teacher, 3 reading resource teachers, 15 classroom teachers and specialists in art education, music education, and physical education. The management team and teaching staff are 79 percent majority and 21 percent minority. The average years of teaching experience among certified staff is nine and a half. Eight staff members have their Bachelor's Degrees; five are working on their Master's Degrees; 18 have attained their Master's Degrees; and one holds a Ph.D. The non-certified staff includes a parent/teacher liaison, a library para-professional, a media specialist, a secretary, a building engineer, a custodian and several aides.

In addition to the District 205 curriculum guide, the staff utilizes special programs to enhance academics. The programs include: Success for All (SFA), a reading and language program that is phonetic and literature based, developed at Johns Hopkins University; Reading Recovery; a computer laboratory consisting of twenty stations; "Teaching and Learning Computers" (TLC); a hands on math program; daily adult tutors from area churches; tutors employed by the city of Rockford; tutors from Suntec, a local industry; and an after school program conducted by two certified staff members, community volunteers and employees of the YMCA. The Parent Teacher Organization is involved with several of these programs, in an effort to involve the parents.

School B is a K-6 magnet school located in the southwestern quadrant of Rockford, Illinois. The school was built and opened in 1993 as a result of the Second Interim Order (April, 1991), which stipulated that a third magnet school be developed. The district proposed that this magnet school be identified as a global studies academy.

The district uses a lottery to determine enrollment. The academy's goal is a racial balance, with 50 percent of the students being majority and 50 percent being minority. In 1993, when the school opened, there were 343 students. Within the school's population, 44.3 percent of the students were Caucasian, 49 percent were African American, and 6.7 percent were Hispanic. Seventy-eight percent of students were from families considered low income.

It is the school policy to have parents sign parent contracts symbolizing the commitment to support the school in education and discipline. During the 1993-94 school year, 88 percent of the parents attended parent-teacher conferences. Involvement in PTO was largely majority parent dominated, with a 68 percent gap in the majority and minority participation.

The school's staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, a secretary, a nurse, a counselor, a parent liaison, a librarian, a media specialist, 16 classroom teachers, 4 classroom aides, 5 instructional specialist (Physical Education, Art, Music, French, and Spanish), 2 remedial reading teachers, a building engineer, 2 custodians and 3 food service persons. Of the teaching and administrative staff, 66 percent are majority and 34 percent are minority. The average years of teaching experience among the teaching staff is 13. Forty-two percent of the classroom teachers have earned their Master's Degree.

School B, the first new school built in the community in 20 years, was built in cooperation with the Park District, YMCA, YWCA, and the Girl's and Boy's Clubs of Rockford. The school has become a model for community-based education. It has several architectural features that allow the school to be used by the community, as well as by the students who attend. Toilets and storage rooms that are only accessible from the outside

are available for use by community and neighborhood groups. There is an amphitheater that incorporates an outdoor stage area. The gymnasium has a high school size court for use by community programs. The school also houses a branch of the Rockford Public Library, for use by the students and community.

These features contribute to the uniqueness of School B's program:

(a) a 200 day extended school year

(b) a daily homework policy

(c) curriculum to develop a global perspective

(d) foreign language K-6

(e) emphasis on geography and history

(f) Junior Achievement program

(g) multi-age and multi-grade academic groups

(h) peer mediators

(i) uniforms

The school year is divided into six time periods. Each period concentrates on a different cultural theme. The cultures include Native American, Hispanic, European, African American, Asian and Arabic.

The instructional program, and supplemental programs of foreign language and community service, assist the school by offering equitable learning opportunities and a global perspective to the education of all students.

The Surrounding Community

Rockford, the second largest city in Illinois, with a population of 140,0000 people, is located 92 miles northwest of Chicago and 14 miles from the Wisconsin state border. The city covers a 50 square mile area.

The median price of a home in Rockford in 1994 was $70, 312. These figures help put Rockford near the top of a housing affordability list for the nation. (Rockford Register Star, Sept. 20, 1994).

The 1990 census figures show a decrease in the Caucasian population, whereas the African American, Hispanic and Asian population has increased. Over the past ten years, the Caucasian population has decreased from 84.3 percent to 79.9 percent. The African American population has increased from 13.2 percent to 14.8 percent. The Hispanic population has increased from 0.5 percent to 1.5 percent.

District 205 is comprised of 4 high schools, 4 middle schools, 40 elementary schools, 2 special education facilities, and 2 early education centers. The total enrollment of students for 1993 in District 205 was 26,498. This was a decline of students from the 1992-1993 school year.

The students enrolled in District 205 in 1993-1994 included 66.8 percent Caucasian, 24 percent African American, 0.03 percent Native American, 2.6 percent Asian and 6.3 percent Hispanic. The district allocates $5,395 per pupil.

During May of 1989, a lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court against the school district. The lawsuit charged the district with long-time discrimination against minority students. An interim agreement is currently being implemented in the district. Minority students have the opportunity to attend schools in predominately white areas through voluntary transfers. The interim court order provides monies to implement in-service training and materials for targeted schools. The school district is also undertaking a change from basic school organization to one of site-based management. The plan calls for each school to develop a mission statement, complete long-range goals, and develop specific action plans to carry out the goals.

Regional and National Context of Problem

Behavior is a major concern to educators and researchers, as evidenced by volumes of books and journals written, research directed towards this issue, and many classes offered, including a class based on Curwin and Mendler's Discipline With Dignity (1988), which was mandated by the Second Interim Order.

Recent opinion polls conducted by public pollsters, such as the Gallup Poll, and by the National Educational Association (NEA), have reported that school discipline is a major concern of teachers, administrators and the pubic. In NEA's 1979 Nationwide Teacher Opinion Poll, 74 percent of the teachers surveyed reported that discipline problems impaired their teaching effectiveness (Jones, 1981). According to Jones (1984), a study done by Feitler and Tokar found that 58 percent of the sample teachers ranked children with chronic discipline problems as the number one cause of job related stress.

The American public perceives school behavior as a growing problem. The Phi Delta Kappan Gallup Poll shows an eight percent increase in public concern about discipline and violence in school (Elam, Gallup and Rose, 1994).

Many schools have responded to the concerns about student behavior and school discipline by developing school wide discipline policies. It has been estimated that three out of four schools have some sort of written discipline policy (Jones, 1984). However, according to the Phi Delta Kappan Poll, 50 percent of teachers surveyed say discipline problems are very serious even though 93 percent of the schools had a written discipline policy (Jones & Jones, 1990).

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of student inappropriate behavior, teacher/researchers in the three targeted classrooms documented inappropriate behaviors, parent contacts related to behavior, and discipline referrals for the first two weeks of school. A behavior checklist was developed by the teacher/researchers (Appendix A) to aid in the recording process. The behavior of 61 students was recorded. A summary of the number of incidents and behavior categories is presented in the following tables.

Table 1

Number and Categories of Discipline Incidents

School A Kindergarten-21 students

BEHAVIORS	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	TOTAL
Off Task	184	158	342
Insubordination	0	0	0
Verbal Abuse	3	2	5
Physical Abuse	4	3	7
Breaking School Rules	5	4	9

Table 2

Number and Categories of Discipline Incidents

School A Second Grade-16 students

BEHAVIORS	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	TOTAL
Off Task	266	191	457
Insubordination	5	6	11
Verbal Abuse	23	16	39
Physical Abuse	0	0	0
Breaking School Rules	3	6	9

Table 3

Number and Categories of Discipline Incidents

School B Kindergarten-24 students

BEHAVIORS	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	TOTAL
Off Task	134	126	260
Insubordination	13	7	20
Verbal Abuse	13	19	32
Physical Abuse	3	5	8
Breaking School Rules	3	6	9

Of the total incidences recorded for all three classrooms during the first two weeks of school, 87 percent dealt with off task behavior. The three classrooms experienced a decrease in off task behavior the second week possibly due to the introduction and modeling of appropriate behaviors.

Out of the 24 parent contacts made due to behavior, only 9 students were involved. Fewer parent contacts were needed the second week compared to

week one in all three classrooms. No discipline referrals were submitted during this ten day period.

In School A, kindergarten classroom, the teacher/researcher feels that the high number of off task behaviors may be attributed to the fact that 18 of the 21 students have never been in a classroom environment. The incidences of physical abuse in the classroom were done by one individual who has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (A.D.H.D.). The incidences occurred shortly before his medicine was administered.

In School A, second grade, all insubordination incidents and all seven parent contacts involved one inclusion child. This child also contributed to a high percentage of the off task behaviors.

In School B, kindergarten classroom, incidents that dealt with failure in relationships between peers (verbal abuse and physical abuse) increased over the two week period. However, incidents that dealt with teacher/student interactions (off task behavior and insubordination) decreased. The 20 incidents of insubordination involved a total of 4 students.

Probable Causes

Children come to school with many experiences that effect their behavior. Therefore, teachers find themselves needing to address more than their academic needs.

The literature suggest several underlying causes for disruptive behavior in the school setting. According to the Committee for Children (1991), aggressive and impulsive children can be found at every socio-economic level. However, these children are over represented at lower socio-economic levels. They live in neighborhoods where they may know people involved in criminal activities, and adult models may have fewer opportunities in

mainstream society. Many low income minorities are left without middle-class members of their groups to provide leadership and role models. Cultural heroes present may glorify violence, power and winning (Banks, 1991-92; Committee for Children, 1991). Families in these neighborhoods may also experience economic stress. Due to the fact that many families have a hard time coping with economic stress, they may experience marital separation, divorce, depression, alcohol, spousal and/or child abuse. Children may react by acting out or rejecting authority to get attention or escape their situation (Burke, 1992). Children from these disrupted families are more likely to be poor, have emotional and behavioral problems, abuse drugs and alcohol, and be sexually and physically abused (Likona, 1993).

Self-esteem can also be affected by low socio-economic status (Eitzen, 1992). Self-esteem, how one feels about ones self, is linked to several life choices (Kohn, 1994). If a child gains high self-esteem, behavior problems may decrease. If a child is unable to secure self-esteem in a positive way, he may seek status through antisocial behavior (Brendtro & Long, 1995; Five activities,1990).

Positive self-esteem will be heavily influenced by the extent to which the child's basic needs have been met. Jones and Jones (1990) cited Glasser (1986) as describing students five basic needs as "(1) to survive and produce, (2) to belong and love, (3) to gain power, (4) to be free, and (5) to have fun. A child who feels powerless or bored will misbehave (Mendler, 1992). Children who do not receive love and support develop a feeling of anger, hate and lack of concern for others (Pringle, 1975). Children's basic and psychological needs must be met at home and in the classroom for an improvement in behavior (Jones & Jones, 1990).

Parents and family have a direct affect on the behavior of children in school. Parents who fail to nurture or show interest in their children or fail to provide adequate supervision tend to have aggressive children (Committee for Children, 1991). "When the social bond between child and adult [is] not nurtured, conscience [is] impaired and children [do] not internalize values" (Brendtro & Long, 1995, p. 53).

Abuse by parents or family members, whether it be physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual can also cause inappropriate behaviors. If children witness or suffer abuse, they may shut down their empathetic responses. These children learn that violence is an acceptable way to interact with others or attain a goal (Committee for Children, 1991).

Many children are put at risk from conception due to drug and alcohol abuse by pregnant mothers. These children have increased chances of being born with neurological and related physical problems such as shorter attention spans, hyperactivity, greater aggressive tendencies, learning and memory problems. These children may be slow to develop friendships and their social skills are hampered by their inability to set limits (Committee for Children, 1991; Turbak, 1994; Waller, 1992/1993).

The belief that violence is acceptable is further reinforced by television and other media. With more and more children lacking parental supervision and the amount of television young children are watching, it is evident that television is becoming the primary source of entertainment and values in our society. Television has a great aptitude for modeling anti-social and anti-caring behavior (Bellanca, 1991). Studies have found at least 50 acts of violence during a half hour broadcast of a well known cartoon show (Curwin & Mendler, 1988). Children who view these programs display more aggression than their peers (Bandura, 1973; Brendtro & Long, 1995).

Inappropriate behavior is often modeled and recognized. According to Burke (1992) and Kreidler (1994) many children live with "put downs", "slams", and sarcasm masqueraded as humor. Their television role models and real life role models are people who get attention at the expense of others. Jones and Jones (1990) believe that one basic reason for classroom management problems in our schools is that many of our students come to school with varying degrees of emotional distress and inadequate social skills. Many children do not exhibit appropriate social skills due to lack of knowledge of what appropriate behavior is. Some children have knowledge of appropriate social skills, but lack practice due to inadequate reinforcement (Committee for Children, 1991). "If teachers don't take the short time to re-educate students with positive social skills, they will spend a great time 'correcting' and 'disciplining' disruptive students through-out the year" (Burke, 1992).

A summary of probable causes for the problem gathered from the sites, and from cited literature included the following elements:

1. low socio-economic status,
2. lack of positive role models,
3. disrupted families,
4. poor self-esteem
5. failure to meet basic and psychological needs,
6. lack of positive parental involvement,
7. physical, verbal, sexual, and/or emotional abuse,
8. prenatal drug and alcohol abuse,
9. media violence,
10. lack of social skills.

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Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

Research offers several strategies for decreasing inappropriate behavior in the classroom. These strategies focus on a child's individual needs as well as whole group needs. Many of these strategies emphasize making children healthy, independent problem solvers. These types of strategies benefit not only high risk children, but also provide early prevention for seemingly well-adjusted children (Committee for Children, 1991).

One of these strategies is conflict resolution. Because conflicts are a part of every school day, children need to be empowered to settle their own disputes (Spann, 1991). Children shouldn't be expected to avoid conflicts, but rather be taught how to effectively handle them (Burke, 1992). Teachers need to model language to help define problems and express feelings (Spann, 1991). Mendler (1992) concurs that students need an outlet for their feelings and emotions. Specific social skills related to conflict resolution need to be taught so students can learn to respect the opinions of others, disagree with the idea instead of the person, solve problems, negotiate and compromise at the right times (Bellanca et al., 1992; Burke, 1992). By dealing with their own conflicts, students may decrease destructive management of conflict and increase social development (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

One type of conflict resolution is peer mediation. Peer mediation uses a mediator, not involved in the conflict, to help two students come to an

agreement through cooperative exploration. Students go through training to become mediators. This training provides them with lifetime dispute resolution skills (Andrea & Morse, 1994). It teaches students how to communicate effectively with one another without verbally or physically fighting.

Researchers also have found that adult members of the community can provide important social interactions. Mentoring programs pair children with one or more adult role models from whom they get guidance, advice, and assistance. Mentors help students build confidence in their own abilities and feel good about themselves, therefore, affecting their behavior in a positive way (Bellanca et al., 1992). Many people using these mentoring programs report positive changes in the students involved (Committee for Children, 1991; Mendler, 1992).

Mentors may also be used to help children academically. Novelli (1993) believes that inappropriate behavior will occur if a child is faced with a task that they are incapable of doing. The student may avoid the task because of the strong possibility of failure. Teachers and mentors can prevent this from occurring by providing these students with extra help, and by making sure they have materials and assignments that meet their academic abilities (Misra & Smith, 1992).

Burke (1992) and Curwin and Mendler (1988) suggest using social contracts for the child who needs extra incentives to display desirable behavior. A social contract would involve:

1. steps taken by the teacher,
2. steps taken by the student,
3. positive consequences of fulfilling the social contract, and
4. negative consequences of not fulfilling the social contract.

Social contracts are effective because they involve the student in the decision-making process, giving them the feeling of control over their environment, and giving them the responsibility for their own behavior. Social contracts also provide individualization of expectations and consequences (Misra & Smith, 1992; Ruhl, 1985).

Educators have found dramatic positive effects on student's on-task behavior when contracts that provide students with incentives for specific behaviors are used (Jones & Jones, 1990). Intrinsic rewards, such as teacher praise and peer recognition, can motivate students to display appropriate behavior. These types of rewards may not be enough to change the behavior of all students, therefore, teachers may have to rely on extrinsic rewards. These rewards may consist of stickers, free-time, monetary items, videos, etc. Some students may require these external reinforcers to stimulate their initial involvement with academics and appropriate behavior (Jones & Jones, 1990). Holubec, Johnson, and Johnson (1988) have found that structured group reward programs help with managing classroom behavior. Groups are rewarded points for each team member using a particular cooperative social skill.

With the amount of interpersonal interactions occurring at school, it is a logical place for social skills to be taught and reinforced (McCadden, Noblit & Rogers, 1995). Teachers can not expect socially unskilled students to cooperate in a learning or social environment by just telling them to do so; therefore, particular social skills must be identified, defined, and taught (Bellanca et al., 1992). If teachers take the time to educate students in social skills, they will spend less time "correcting" and "disciplining" disruptive students throughout the year (Bellanca, 1991; Burke, 1992). "Teaching social skills to students will help them develop interpersonal skills, self-esteem, and

an internal locus of control" (Burke, 1992, p. 41). Abruscato (1994) gives nine steps for successfully improving social skills.

1. Establish a positive environment for developing social skills.
2. Relate the social skills to your basic classroom rules.
3. Have cooperative groups practice their social skills before starting their actual work.
4. Highlight one or two social skills for each group session.
5. Teach children to evaluate their progress in developing social skills.
6. Choose group projects that lend themselves to cooperation.
7. Limit group materials to encourage interdependence.
8. Discourage slacking.
9. Promote interaction across cooperative groups.

When students develop these skills for social interaction, the result is an indirect increase in self-esteem (Beane, 1991; Committee for Children, 1991). Children with high self-esteem exhibit desirable behavior (Bellanca et al., 1992). Teachers can enhance students self-esteem by incorporating multicultural activities, hands-on activities, thematic units, drama, student self evaluation, and cooperative learning (Andrews & Simms, 1989; Beane, 1991).

Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy that is very effective in teaching social values and skills (Bellanca et al., 1992). Bellanca and Fogarty (1991) believe that cooperative learning provides positively structured peer interactions for intense student involvement. If a teacher provides a cooperative environment, students will begin to handle individual, group, and class wide problems (Burke, 1992). Students using cooperative learning will begin to envision consequences of actions, respect differing view points,

conceive of a variety of strategies for dealing with conflict, and engage in creative problem solving (Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

Parents are the most important and influential people in a student's life. The influence and support given by the family may directly affect the behavior of children in school. The student is more likely to receive encouragement and reinforcement for desirable school behavior when parents feel good about their child's teacher and school (Jones & Jones, 1990). Teachers need to develop a positive rapport with parents early in the school year. Parental involvement should be encouraged by making the classroom a welcoming place, seeking parent input for decision-making, and encouraging parent visibility at school. Students are more likely to exhibit appropriate behavior when in the presence of parental figures (Mendler, 1992).

Regardless of what strategies a teacher chooses to use, desirable behaviors should always be modeled. Children will learn appropriate behavior the same way they learn inappropriate behavior; with modeling, practice, and reinforcement. Students learn more from what a teacher does than what the teacher says (Committee for Children, 1991; Mendler, 1992). Esteeming climates provide role models who show others acceptable behaviors and values (Bellanca et al., 1992).

Project Outcomes and Solution Components

As a result of increased emphasis on social skills development, during the period of August 1995 to December 1995, the kindergarten and second grade students from the targeted classes will decrease inappropriate behavior as measured by teacher observations, the number of discipline referrals and the number of parent contacts relative to behavior.

The actions for decreasing inappropriate behavior are designed to address strategies the three teacher-researchers will incorporate into their daily lessons. These strategies include developing materials that foster social skills, developing a series of learning activities that include social skills, and creating an environment in which social skills are valued and demonstrated.

Action Plan for the Intervention

I. Develop materials that foster social skills
   A. Locate children's literature
   B. Create T-Charts
   C. Collect records, cassette tapes, video tapes, and computer programs
   D. Gather games/puzzles
   E. Collect manipulatives
II. Develop learning activities that include social skills
   A. Social skills to be targeted
      1. Second grade social skills
         a. Active listening
         b. Six inch voices
         c. Taking turns
         d. Sharing
         e. Complimenting/encouraging
      2. Kindergarten social skills
         a. Active listening
         b. Sharing
         c. Empathy (understanding others feelings and motives)
         d. Complimenting/encouraging
         e. Taking turns

B. Processes used to teach social skills

1. Give direct instruction on targeted social skill

a. T-chart

b. Children's literature

c. Role playing

d. Modeling

2. Incorporate social skill into cooperative learning lessons (see Appendices E-J)

3. Incorporate social skill(s) into learning center (see appendix K)

C. Schedule for teaching social skills

1. Introduce overall good behaviors during first week of school

a. T-chart

b. Modeling

c. Role playing

d. Learning center

e. Children's literature

2. One social skill is emphasized each week for five weeks (the order in which social skills are presented is based on student needs observed by the teacher/researcher)

3. Teacher/researcher evaluates student's behavior

a. Behavior checklist (see Appendix A)

b. Number of referrals (see Appendix B)

c. Number of parent contacts relative to behavior

4. Teacher/researcher re-teaches social skill(s) as needed for remaining weeks

III. Create an environment in which social skills are valued and demonstrated

A. Use posters

B. Create bulletin boards

C. Select star/student of the week

D. Read children's literature

E. Create cooperative room arrangement

F. Teacher/researcher models social skills

G. Use incentives to reinforce children's use of social skills

1. Verbal
2. Non-verbal

Methods of Assessment

The data collection methods to be used to assess the interventions include teacher observations, parent contact data, and discipline referral forms (see Appendix B). Teacher observations will target the following behaviors: physical abuse, verbal abuse, insubordination, off-task behavior and breaking school rules. A daily behavioral checklist will be used for documentation. The number of offenses recorded on the behavioral checklist December 1995 will be compared to the number of offenses recorded August 1995.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project was to decrease inappropriate behavior in the classroom setting. Emphasis on social skills development was increased in order to bring about the desired changes.

A positive classroom environment was established the first week of school in order to promote appropriate behavior. Posters and bulletin boards that emphasize the value of social skills were displayed in the classrooms. T-charts, created by the students, remained hanging in the classroom during the intervention as a reminder of student's understanding of each individual social skill. Children's literature, tapes, and records used during direct instruction of social skills were also made available for children to explore on their own. The room arrangement was set up to create a cooperative atmosphere. The children sat in base groups at tables instead of individual desks. The groups were established during the second week of the school year and were maintained throughout the intervention.

Social skills were not only taught through direct instruction, but also incorporated in cooperative learning lessons and learning centers. During the first week of the school year, school rules and positive behavior were introduced. Beginning the second week, one social skill was emphasized

each week for five weeks. The skills chosen for instruction at kindergarten level included: active listening, sharing, empathy, complimenting/ encouraging, and taking turns. At the second grade level, skills included: active listening, six inch voices, taking turns, sharing, and complimenting/encouraging. The targeted social skill for the week was taught directly using T-charts, children's literature, role playing, and/or modeling. After instruction on each social skill was given, it was incorporated into one or more cooperative learning lessons in a content area. Lesson plans devoted to each of these skills can be found in Appendices E-J. During the week the social skill was taught, it was emphasized in learning centers to provide enrichment of the skill. Examples of these learning centers can be found in Appendix K.

Children received incentives to reinforce their use of social skills. Verbal incentives included: praise, compliments, words of encouragement, etc. Non-verbal incentives included: stickers, free time, hugs, smiles, warm fuzzys, etc. In School B, students were selected to be the Student of the Week based on their use of social skills.

After the initial six week intervention, teacher/researcher evaluated student's understanding and demonstration of the social skills taught. Circumstances that arose, such as new students entering, lack of understanding, and lack of demonstration, caused teacher/researcher to re-teach particular social skills. The remaining weeks of the intervention were used to re-teach social skills, and give the opportunity for students to demonstrate appropriate behavior. In School B, kindergarten, one student was responsible for a major percentage of the inappropriate behaviors recorded. The action plan was altered to accommodate this student. The student and teacher/researcher filled out a behavior checklist together

everyday after school. Checklists were signed and returned to school the next day. Appropriate incentives or punishments were given at home.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of social skills instruction on student behavior, a daily tally of discipline incidents was maintained throughout the intervention period. Tables 4, 5, and 6 compare data collected for two weeks preceding the intervention with data collected for two weeks following the intervention.

Table 4

Number and Categories of Discipline Incidents

School A Kindergarten-21 students

BEHAVIORS	PRE-INTERVENTION	POST-INTERVENTION
Off Task	342	141
Insubordination	0	0
Verbal Abuse	5	1
Physical Abuse	7	0
Breaking School Rules	9	2

Table 5

Number and Categories of Discipline Incidents

School A Second Grade-18 students

BEHAVIORS	PRE-INTERVENTION	POST-INTERVENTION
Off Task	457	227
Insubordination	11	5
Verbal Abuse	39	33
Physical Abuse	0	7
Breaking School Rules	9	12

Table 6

Number and Categories of Discipline Incidents

School B Kindergarten-24 students

BEHAVIORS	PRE-INTERVENTION	POST-INTERVENTION
Off Task	260	200
Insubordination	20	7
Verbal Abuse	32	5
Physical Abuse	8	2
Breaking School Rules	9	1

The total number of incidences recorded for all three classrooms decreased 53 percent after the intervention. Teachers/researchers in both kindergarten classes experienced a decrease in discipline incidents of all targeted behaviors. However, in School A, second grade, incidents of physical abuse and breaking school rules increased while other targeted

behaviors decreased. It should be noted that the majority of discipline incidents were caused by three out of the eighteen students in the classroom.

Eleven total parent contacts were made during the two week period following the intervention. One student from School B, kindergarten, was responsible for ten of the contacts. This student was also the recipient of the only discipline referral made during the intervention.

Although Table 4 indicates a significant decrease in all targeted behaviors, journal entries for School A, kindergarten, reveal that students did not exhibit appropriate behavior for a substitute teacher. The students were fighting, yelling, and being disruptive. The Principal was called in, and several students were removed from the classroom.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on the behavior checklists, the students' showed a marked improvement in behavior. The social skills learned during direct instruction, cooperative learning, role playing, and learning centers appear to have transferred to interpersonal behavior. The amount of teacher-time and energy devoted to off-task behavior was reduced. Due to the increase of on-task behavior, direct instruction time was increased and interpersonal skills improved.

Teachers/researchers felt that students exhibited the transfer of social skills when a familiar person was present such as; classroom teachers, classroom aides, reading teachers, building specialists, and support staff. This can be confirmed with a statement made by a specialist dealing with students who participated in the intervention. It was communicated to the teacher/researcher that this class displayed social skills by showing empathy for one another, complimenting and encouraging each other, as well as

sharing with each other. However, this transfer of social skills was not observed when an unfamiliar person was present, such as a substitute teacher. The teachers/researchers felt that children from this population need stability, familiar expectations, and clear limits in order to display appropriate behavior.

Teachers/researchers recommend the direct teaching of social skills throughout the school year. Social skills need to be taught and retaught as needed. The more exposure, practice, and reinforcement children get with social skills, the more appropriate their behavior is going to be.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Behavior Checklist

Week of _____

Behavior	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Total
Insubordination						
Verbal Fighting						
Physical Fighting						
Off Task						
Breaking School Rules						

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Appendix B
Discipline Referral Form

REFLECTION ROOM REFERRAL

Student: _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____

Time to be sent back to classroom: _____

Reasons for this referral:

__Out of class without permission
__Constantly out of seat
__Not following directions
__Defiance of authority
__Disturbing classmates
__Destructive to school property
__Rude/Discourteous
__Excessive talking
__Unacceptable language
__Shoving/Horseplay
__Disruptive/Uncooperative
__Failure to return signed forms
_____

Action taken prior to this referral:

__Conference with student
__Parent contact
__Changed student's seat
__Time-out in class
__Action plan/behavior contract
_____
_____

Parent: This notice is to inform you of a disciplinary incident involving the student. Please note the action taken by the teacher and the corrective actio initiated today. Please sign below and return to the school on the next school day.

_____
Parent's signature

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Appendix C
Suggested books for social skills

Allen, Jeffrey. (1985). Nosey Mrs. Rat. New York: Viking Kestrel.

Anastasio, Dina. (1991). Please Pass the Peas. New York: Warner Juvenile Books.

Anderson, Hans Christian. (1979). The Ugly Duckling. Troll Association.

Berenstain, Jan & Stan. (1985). The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Birney, Betty. (1993). Oh, Brother! Someone Won't Share! Racine : Western.

Bourgeois, Paulette. (1991). Franklin Fibs. New York: Scholastic Inc.

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Carle, Eric. (1977). The Grouchy Ladybug. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Carlson, Nancy. (1990). Arnie and the New Kid. New York: Viking Press.

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Leaf Munro. (1985). Manners Can Be Fun. New York: Harper & Row Pub.

Lionni, Leo. (1988). Six Crows. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Lundell, Margo. (1988). Woody, Be Good! A First Book of Manners. New York: Grosset & Dunlap.

Marshall, James. (1977). Miss Nelson Is Missing. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Martin, Ann. (1992). Rachael Parker, Kindergarten Showoff. New York Scholastic Inc.

Mayer, Mercer. (1989). Little Critter's This Is My Friend. Racine, WI: Western Pub. Co.

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McQueen, Lucinda. (1985). The Little Red Hen. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Nelson, Jo Anne. (1989). I Don't Care. Cleveland, OH: Modern Curriculum Press.

O'Brien, Anne Sibley. (1986). I Don't Want To Go. New York: Henry Holt & Co Inc.

Pathman, Pessy. (1991). Ruby the Copycat. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Pfister, Marcus. (1992). The Rainbow Fish. New York: North-South Books.

Wilde, Oscar (1984). The Selfish Giant. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Appendix D
Suggested cassette and video tapes for social skills

Cassettes

Jim Gill sing The Sneezing Song and other Contagious Tunes. Chicago, Illinois: Jim Gill Music, BMI.

Second Step Songs. Seattle, Washington: Committee for Children.

Singable Songs for the Very Young (Raffi). Universal City, California: Troubadour Records Ltd.

Videos

Berenstain Bears Tell the Truth

Berenstain Bears Learn Their Manners

Little Critters Just Me & My Dad

Winnie the Pooh Makes Friends

Winnie the Pooh and Manners

Appendix E
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Complimenting

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Make a web (in the middle write "compliments") Around it have children brainstorm nice things that they can say to people. Read the story Ask Nicely, by Joy Cowley. With their partner, have children practice giving compliments.

FOLLOW UP: In the mornings have children think of a "Daily Compliment." During the day catch children using the "Daily Compliment" appropriately, and give them positive reinforcement, such as: a hug, sticker, encouragement.

Appendix E continued
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Complimenting

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Make T-chart on complimenting. Brainstorm as many compliments as possible. Discuss situations when a compliment might be used. Divide class into partners. Make and copy patterns. After cooperative lessons ask student to give their partner a compliment. Call on several students to share the compliment that their partner paid them.

FOLLOW UP: Keep a list of compliments received from visitors or other teachers and students in the hallway. Model and praise use of compliments.

Appendix E continued
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Complimenting/Encouraging

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Students are divided into cooperative groups. Each group is given a weigh and measure project. A monitor is assigned the job of tallying compliments and encouraging remarks made by group members. This makes students more aware of their positive comments to one another.

FOLLOW UP:

Appendix F
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Active Listening

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Children get paired up some way. Discuss food we like to eat for dinner. With their partner they discuss their favorite food. When discussion is over children get a piece of paper and draw their partners favorite food. When every child is done, sit at circle. Each child presents their partner by saying "My partner was _____. His /Her favorite food is _____."

FOLLOW UP: Collect all pictures and put together to make a class book called "Our Favorite Food."

Appendix F continued
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Active Listening

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Children gather on floor. Teacher says, "If you can hear me do this (touch nose)". Repeat quietly until everyone is looking at you and touching their nose. Praise students for listening. Show children blank T-chart. Children contribute their ideas about what good listening looks like and sounds like. Children work with partner, first modeling poor listening. Then tell group what their partner did that showed they were not listening. Model good listening with partners and discuss.

FOLLOW UP: Point out good examples of listening throughout the week. Use specific statements from T-chart. "I know _____'s listening because her eyes are on me.

Appendix F continued
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Active listening

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Each student is given a partner. They sit with their backs to each other. One child is given a package of shapes. They make a design of their choice. The other student is also given a bag of shapes. That child then has to make the design made by their partner by only listening to their description. They then compare their designs to see if directions were followed.

FOLLOW UP:

Appendix G
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Sharing

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Children will share materials in their cooperative groups. There will only be one set of each item, so sharing will be necessary to complete the assigned lesson.

FOLLOW UP:

Appendix G continued
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Sharing

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Sing The Sharing Song by Raffi. Student discussion about how you feel when someone shares with you. Why is it important? Children do cut and paste animal homes with partner using one scissors and one glue per group.

FOLLOW UP: After centers each day, gather in the circle and tell something you shared that day.

Appendix H
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Taking turns

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Set up different stations around the room. At each station have a different game. (Hi-Ho CherryO, Memory, Lucky Ducky, fishing, etc.) Introduce how to play each game if children haven't played it. Discuss how to take turns. Children go to the stations and practice taking turns. After time limit is up, have children rank how well they took turns by thumbs-up or thumbs down.

FOLLOW UP:

Appendix H continued
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Taking Turns

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Introduce feely box. Pass box around the children to feel, looking for a certain shape. Discuss taking turns. When, in school, do we need to take turns (calendar helper, getting a drink, etc.)? Show children how to play Hi Ho CherryO. Use parent helper to play game with four at a time.

FOLLOW UP: Children use sand timers to take turns while working with partners at computers. Hi Ho CherryO and other games are put in centers. Praise those taking turns well.

Appendix H continued
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Taking turns

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Children will take turns by using math board games in cooperative groups. Two groups will do addition while three groups will do subtraction. Children draw a card and move their game piece one person at a time.

FOLLOW UP:

Appendix I
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Six inch voices

METHODS / PROCEDURES: The children are divided into cooperative groups. Each child is given a role. One role is the "noise meter monitor". While the group is doing their cooperative learning lesson, one person will indicate noise level by moving needle on meter:
6" voice - acceptable
12" voice - not acceptable
18" voice - not acceptable

FOLLOW UP:

Appendix J
Cooperative Learning Lesson

SOCIAL SKILL(S): Empathy

METHODS / PROCEDURES: Sing "How I Feel" from Second Step. Use Second Step pictures to determine how children are feeling (one each day). Learn to use "I" statements. Ex. "I feel angry when you push me." Give children situations to role play...showing how they would feel and making their own "I" statements. Groups of three discuss a time they felt happy, sad, etc.

FOLLOW UP: Encourage use of "I" statements. Whenever conflict arises, remind students to use "I" statements.

Appendix K
Learning Centers

Writing Center:	1. Children write books together or illustrate a page in a book together.
	2. Children share supplies at writing center.
	3. Children take turns writing and reading their stories for listening skills.
	4. Children make cooperative book about how they used the targeted skill that week.
Math Center:	1. Children take turns playing board games for addition and subtraction practice.
	2. Children share playing cards and practice complimenting and encouraging each other.
Blocks:	1. With a partner, children pile, stack,or arrange blocks to see how high they can arrange them without the blocks falling or knocking them over.
Library: listen.	1. A child chooses a book and reads it, while others
	2. First graders come and read to children while they're at the library center. The children practice their active listening skills.
Puzzles:	1. As a group, children work together to put the puzzle together.

2. Children work on one puzzle together, taking turns putting together the pieces.

Drama:

1. Children dress up and play make-believe.

2. Children work on manners and sharing the costumes.

Games:

1. Children concentrate on taking turns and politely reminding each other when it's their turn.

Appendix L
T-Charts

Sharing

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Giving someone something	"You can have some of mine."
Separating	"I'll divide them up."
Piles with equal amounts	"Everyone gets the same amount."
Taking turns	

Complimenting/Encouraging

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Smiling	"You did a great job!"
Nodding	"You can do it!"
Helping	"I like the way you did that!"
Pats on the back	"I like you!"
	"I'll help you!"

Active Listening

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Sitting close	Quiet
Nodding	Asking questions
Not talking	Retelling/restating
Paying attention	

6" Voices

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Talking	Whispers
Nodding	Inside voices
	Talking

Taking Turns

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Sharing	"Go ahead."
One person at a time	"Your turn."
Standing in line	6" voices
Cooperating	Encouraging words

Empathy

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Hugging	"It's O.k.."
Sympathetic smile	Encouraging words
Being nice	"I like you."
Patting someones back	"Are you o.k.?"
Nodding	Friendly words